



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 108th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 150

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2004

No. 116—Part II

Senate

TRIBUTE TO ALVIN SEYMOUR MERRILL

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, I am grateful for the opportunity today to pay tribute to a wonderful man, loving husband, father, and grandfather, and a true hero—Mr. Alvin Seymour Merrill. Al recently passed away after living a lifetime of dedicated service to his family, community, and to our country. Al was my brother-in-law and a person whom I truly admired and respected for the love and devotion he displayed not only to my sister and their children and grandchildren, but to the ideals of freedom America represents.

Al was born and raised in a rural Utah farming community. He was the seventh of nine children, raised by a widowed mother. His work on the farm led him to a life of service in the United States Marine Corps, USMC. It was while he was waiting for some farm machinery to be repaired in Salt Lake City that he was approached by a recruiter for the USMC and asked to join the service. He signed the paper, and was shortly on his way to boot camp. This fortuitous day led to long and distinguished 20 years of active duty as a Marine. He loved the Marines and gladly answered their call of duty in many places throughout the world.

Al rose through the ranks in the USMC and became a First Sergeant a position only entrusted to the best and bravest. He served in the Korean and Vietnam Wars and received two Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star for extraordinary valor and heroism. He was also a survivor of the historic Korean Battle of the Chosin Reservoir. In fact, his name is forever etched on a monument at Utah's Hill Air Force Base honoring the men who survived this battle.

Al's respect and love for the Marines didn't end with his active duty. He took great pride in escorting war dead after the Korean War and arranging proper burials for his fellow Marines. He also served as a drill instructor and

trained many new recruits entering the Marine Corps. His dedication to this training was extraordinary—he wanted all Marines to have the best training possible in case they might also face combat.

It was Al's service in combat which led to his death many years later. During service in Vietnam, Al was exposed to Agent Orange. He didn't realize this had happened until 30 years later when it began to attack his body and slowly rob him of his life. When asked if he was bitter about this exposure he replied, "No, I knew the risks when I signed up." In addition to this exposure, Al carried shrapnel in his body as a result of injuries sustained in fighting for our country.

I cannot even begin to express what his quiet bravery and dignity has meant to his family and to all those who knew him. He was a true war hero and an example of someone who was willing to give the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our country and the freedom we cherish.

Al was also an ROTC Instructor at the University of Utah, and South and Cottonwood High Schools in Utah. He retired from an honorable career with the Utah Transit Authority. In addition, he was also politically active and always found time to help candidates running for office get elected. Al was elected himself to serve one term in the Utah House of Representatives.

Al chose to live his life in service to his fellow men, not only in the Marines but also in his community and his church. He served three full-time missions for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, spreading his message of Christ's love and hope to people throughout our Nation.

Al was fortunate to marry a wonderful, devoted woman, my sister, Frances Hatch Merrill, who stood by his side for 47 years. Her devotion to him and his life was an inspiration to all as we watched her help Al with serious health challenges and remain a stead-

fast partner until the end. Al and Frances were blessed with eight children and 12 grandchildren whom they love very much.

Mr. President, Al Merrill's life was dedicated to service and it is this legacy of faith and strength that he will leave to his family.

We just buried him recently in Arlington National Cemetery in a wonderful plot right near the administration building. We are so grateful to the Marine Corps for what they have done to help us in the memorialization of this wonderful man. We are so grateful for the Marine Corps members who showed up to represent him at the cemetery. We are so grateful to the Marine Corps person who played taps for my brother-in-law.

Al Merrill was a wonderful man and a true American hero. I never heard him once brag about his service, and he was in both wars. Everybody who knew him knew what a wonderful man he was. I will be eternally grateful for the example he set for all of us to follow. Al Merrill was truly a giant among men.

I have been reading a history of the Marine Corps and he is mentioned prominently throughout this history, what he meant as an example of morality and decency to other young recruits through the years and as he grew older in the corps. He told my sister one time: Fran, you have to know that the Marine Corps comes first.

That was nice for him to say; we knew his family and his wife came first, but the Marine Corps came an equal first, no question about it.

Thank you for this opportunity to honor Alvin C. Merrill and the life he lived in service to his family, his community, and to our great country of America.

WORLD HEART DAY

Mr. FRIST. Madam President, heart disease is the world's No. 1 killer. Heart disease is responsible for one in

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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